

U.S. Application No. 10/016,724
DRAFT Claims

PATENT
930007-2188

1. (Currently Amended) A flexible fluid containment vessel for the transportation and/or containment of cargo comprising a fluid or fluidisable material, said vessel comprising:

an elongated flexible tubular structure having an interior and exterior and being comprised of fabric having a first circumference;

means for rendering said tubular structure impervious;

said tubular structure having a front end and a rear end;

means for filling and emptying said vessel of cargo;

wherein at least one of said front end or rear end is so formed so as to define an opening having a second circumference which is less than that of the first circumference; and

clamping mechanism for closing said opening, said mechanism having a receiving portion in which said end is inserted between a ring portion having a radially extending member with a curved engaging surface which extends radially outward and a ring receiving surface having a corresponding geometry to said ring portion wherein said ring portion and said ring receiving surface remain rotationally fixed with respect to one another when an adjustable a clamping force is exerted by the clamping mechanism clamping said end between said ring portion and said ring receiving surface thereby affixing said mechanism to said end.
2. (Canceled).
3. (Canceled).
4. (Previously Presented) The vessel in accordance with claim 1 wherein ring receiving surface includes a complementary curved surface to that of the radially extending member.

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5. (Original) The vessel in accordance with claim 4 wherein said ring portion includes an axially located hub supported thereon, said ring receiving surface includes an axially located member which is axially aligned with said hub and a load bearing device coupled between said hub and said axial member so as to effect a load therebetween so as to provide a clamping force.
6. (Original) The vessel in accordance with claim 5 wherein said load bearing device is adjustable so as to adjust the amount of the clamping force.
7. (Original) The vessel in accordance with claim 5 wherein said ring portion and ring receiving surface include openings that allow the egress and ingress of fluid to and from the interior of the tubular structure.
8. (Original) The vessel in accordance with claim 7 wherein the ring portion is located on the interior and the ring receiving surface is located on the exterior with said ring receiving surface having means for closing off flow of fluid to and from the tubular structure.
9. (Original) The vessel in accordance with claim 1 wherein said clamping mechanism includes means for coupling a tow cable thereto.
10. (Original) The vessel in accordance with claim 8 wherein said clamping mechanism includes means for coupling a tow cable thereto.

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11. (Original) The vessel in accordance with claim 1 wherein said clamping mechanism is made from metal or a reinforced composite.
12. (Original) The vessel in accordance with claim 8 wherein said clamping mechanism is made from metal or a reinforced composite.
13. (Original) The vessel in accordance with claim 1 wherein said clamping mechanism is located on the front end and rear end.
14. (Original) The vessel in accordance with claim 5 wherein said clamping mechanism is located on the front end and rear end.
15. (Canceled).
16. (New) A flexible fluid containment vessel for the transportation and/or containment of cargo comprising a fluid or fluidisable material, said vessel comprising:
an elongated flexible tubular structure having an interior and exterior and being comprised of fabric having a first circumference;
means for rendering said tubular structure impervious;
said tubular structure having a front end and a rear end;
means for filling and emptying said vessel of cargo;
wherein at least one of said front end or rear end is so formed so as to define an opening having a second circumference which is less than that of the first circumference; and

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a clamping mechanism for closing said opening comprising:

a first ring portion having a radially extending member with a curved engaging surface which extends radially outward;

a second ring portion having a ring receiving surface with a corresponding geometry to said curved engaging surface of said first ring portion;

a clamping device disposed through an aperture in at least one of said first ring portion and said second ring portion and which slidably engages the at least one aperture in an axial direction; and

wherein said clamping device exerts an adjustable clamping force clamping said end between said first ring portion and said second ring portion thereby affixing said clamping mechanism to said end.

17. (New) The vessel in accordance with claim 16 wherein the ring receiving surface includes a complementary curved surface to that of the radially extending member.

18. (New) The vessel in accordance with claim 17 wherein said first ring portion includes an axially located hub supported thereon, said second ring portion includes an axially located member which is axially aligned with said hub and a load bearing device coupled between said hub and said axial member so as to effect a load therebetween so as to provide a clamping force.

19. (New) The vessel in accordance with claim 18 wherein said load bearing device is adjustable so as to adjust the amount of the clamping force.

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20. (New) The vessel in accordance with claim 18 wherein said first ring portion and said second ring portion include openings that allow the egress and ingress of fluid to and from the interior of the tubular structure.
21. (New) The vessel in accordance with claim 20 wherein the first ring portion is located on the interior and the second ring portion is located on the exterior with said second ring portion having means for closing off flow of fluid to and from the tubular structure.
22. (New) The vessel in accordance with claim 16 wherein said clamping mechanism includes means for coupling a tow cable thereto.
23. (New) The vessel in accordance with claim 21 wherein said clamping mechanism includes means for coupling a tow cable thereto.